

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

USDEL MBFR VIENNA

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 5888

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, UR, PO

SUBJECT: SOVIET PRESS ON PORTUGUESE ELECTION

GENEVA FOR USDEL CSCE

USIA FOR IBS, IEE, IPS

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1. SUMMARY: THOUGH IT IS STILL TOO EARLY TO SAY WHAT THE

SOVIETS WILL MAKE OUT OF THE ELECTION RESULTS IN PORTUGAL, THEIR INITIAL REACTION SEEMS TO BE A RATHER DEFENSIVE ONE. THE SOVIET PRESS IS EMPHASIZING THAT THE ELECTIONS SHOW POPULAR SUPPORT FOR THE PRESENT COURSE OF THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT; THAT THEY DO NOT INDICATE ANY MAJOR CHANGES IN THE COURSE OR THE COMPOSITION OF THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT; AND THAT THE PORTUGUESE COMMUNIST PARTY REMAINS AN INFLUENTIAL FORCE DESPITE ITS LESS THAN INSPIRING SHOWING IN THE ELECTIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. INITIAL SOVIET PRESS COVERAGE OF THE ELECTIONS IN PORTUGAL (IZVESTIYA APRIL 26, PRAVDA APRIL 27) WAS A REASONABLY STRAIGHTFORWARD PRESENTATION OF THE RESULTS, INCLUDING PERCENTAGES OF THE TOTAL VOTE ACHIEVED BY EACH OF THE MAJOR PARTIES. EARLY ARTICLES EMPHASIZED THAT THE "GOVERNING COALITION" OF THE FOUR PARTIES BETWEEN THEM GOT OVER 80 PERCENT OF THE VOTE, AND DID NOT DWELL ON UNIMPRESSIVE SHOWING BY THE COMMUNIST PARTY ITSELF. AND PRAVDA'S AUTHORITATIVE WEEKLY INTERNATIONAL REVIEW COLUMN ON APRIL 27 NOTED IMPORTANCE OF THE ELECTIONS, BUT DID NOT EVALUATE THEIR OUTCOME.

3. PRAVDA'S APRIL 28 FOLLOW-UP REPORT ON THE ELECTIONS TAKES A MUCH MORE DEFENSIVE STANCE. IT PARAPHRASES CUNHAL AS SAYING THAT OUTCOME SHOWED CONTINUED SUPPORT BY THE PEOPLE FOR THE "SOCIALIST FUTURE" LAID DOWN IN THE AFM'S PLATFORM. IT THEN QUOTES HMI DIRECTLY THAT "IT WOULD BE AN ERROR TO CONSIDER THAT THE RESULTS OF THE ELECTION ARE THE SOLE INDICATOR OF THE POWER AND INFLUENCE OF THE POLITICAL PARTIES. THE ELECTION DOES NOT REFLECT IN FULL MEASURE THE STRENGTH OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY, ITS INFLUENCE, ITS ABILITY TO MOBILIZE THE MASSES, OR ITS ROLE IN THE PORTUGUESE REVOLUTION."

4. PRAVDA TAKES PAINS TO POINT OUT THAT SOARES DECLARED THE SOCIALISTS WOULD CONTINUE TO RESPECT THE AGREEMENT WITH THE AFM ON THE CONSTITUTION, AND THAT GONCALVES SAID THE ELECTIONS DID NOT MAKE NECESSARY ANY CHANGES IN THE MAKE-UP OF THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT. X FURTHER, SOARES IS QUOTED AS SAYING THAT

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THE SOCIALISTS "ARE NOT ANTI-COMMUNISTS".

5. COMMENT. IN COMMENTARY AND REPORTS BEFORE THE ELECTION, THE SOVIET PRESS HAD PREPARED ITS READERS FOR A SOMEWHAT LESS THAN BRILLIANT SHOWING BY THE COMMUNISTS, ASSERTING THAT THE POLITICAL INNOCENCE OF THE PORTUGUESE MIGHT LEAD THEM TO GIVE "A SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF VOTES" TO PARTIES "ON THE RIGHT FLANK" (PRAVDA

APRIL 25). AND IN THE TWO MAJOR COMMENTARIES ON PORTUGAL IMMEDIATELY PRECEDING THE ELECTION IN PRAVDA (APRIL 25) AND IZVESTIYA (APRIL 24), THE PORTUGUESE COMMUNIST PARTY WAS NOT MENTIONED ONCE--STRESS WAS PLACED INSTEAD ON SUPPORT FOR THE "ALLIANCE OF THE PEOPLE AND THE AFM." WHILE THE SOVIETS THUS EXPECTED THE COMMUNIST PARTY TO TAKE SOMETHING OF A PUMMELING, THE UNEXPECTED STRENGTH OF THE SOCIALISTS, AND THE PROBABLY WORSE THAN EXPECTED SHOWING OF THE COMMUNISTS, HAVE PUT THEM ON THE DEFENSIVE.
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